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# A LETTER

TO THE

Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

BY

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*BISHOP OF NOVA SCOTIA.*

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TO THE  
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

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MY LORD ARCHBISHOP,

It may perhaps be remembered by your Grace that, at the Lambeth Conference, when the Report of Committee No. 6 was presented, I objected to the introduction of the subjects under letter E, inasmuch as they could not be properly considered at that late hour, and many (if not most) of us had understood that they were to be excluded. I could not, on that last day of our deliberations, venture to occupy the time of the Conference with any lengthened observations; and, the Report having been so modified as to obviate the most serious objections entertained by myself and others, I gave a silent assent. But I was much dissatisfied with our action, and I venture before leaving England to express to your Grace what I should have liked to say to my assembled brethren.

It may be well to state explicitly that I have no sympathy with the introducers of Romish doctrine, or of Romish ritual, as distinguished from what is truly Catholic, and I have no doubt that a stumbling-block is put in the way of many, and that serious prejudices against the truth are fostered by the folly of some (chiefly young men) who delight in aping the gestures of Roman priests, and adopting Roman phraseology. I assume, indeed, that I am more fully convinced of the gravity of the errors of the Church of Rome, and of the extreme danger of those who are perverted by her, than they are who would drive over to that Communion all who are tainted with any of her errors. For it would be uncharitable to suppose that they would wish to send men over, if they realised the peril of abandoning Christ's own institution, and receiving only

a mutilated sacrament, and the consequences of the adoption of the new dogmas. They who can join that corrupt Communion after the late examples of her mode of manufacturing Articles of the faith, appear to me to be smitten with judicial blindness.

My objection then to the Report was, that it was partial and one-sided, avowedly directed against men who (whatever may be thought of their tenets and practices), are generally patterns and examples of earnest devotion and self-sacrifice, who have unquestionably gained for the Church of England a powerful influence among large classes of the people by whom she was formerly hardly recognised. In *my* opinion, any resolution adopted by the Conference, with reference to these men, should have been much more comprehensive than the Report presented to us. In the first place, our own duty should have been stated, and of this we could have spoken with much more propriety than any other assembly could; we might have acknowledged the obligation of strict conformity to the law on the part of those who have to administer it, and I believe that such an acknowledgment would have had a most soothing effect, for nothing is more galling and irritating than coercion by those who indulge themselves at their own discretion, who declaim against lawlessness while they are themselves flagrant offenders. I am not at all surprised that men are irritated, for example, by charges of lawlessness because they wear the vestments, while we, the Bishops, openly and habitually transgress the plain injunctions of the Canon, which requires us, when celebrating in our cathedrals, to wear copes, and moreover to have an epistoler and gospeller in the corresponding vestments, *i.e.* according to the rubrics of Ed. VI., albs with tunicles.<sup>1</sup> And again, they may most justly complain that they are singled out for condemnation, on account of changes which they believe to be according to law rightly interpreted, while men who are guilty of an undoubted violation of the law by the innovation of omitting the Athanasian Creed, boldly declaring that they will not allow it to be used in their churches, are favoured and promoted.

If we had thus first acknowledged our own obligation to strictly observe the law, we might with a good grace have proceeded to insist upon a similar observance by the clergy. But still I

<sup>1</sup> We have also unanimously introduced an innovation, by adopting the scarlet hood with our robes, without any authority with which I am acquainted.



should have objected to the proposition without any qualifications that no alteration from long accustomed ritual should be made contrary to the admonition of the Bishops. I would at all events insert the words "unless it be alleged that such alteration is made in conformity with the written law of the Church." For although it is theoretically true, that nothing should be done without the Bishop, yet practically, under present circumstances, and where Bishops act autocratically, not by and with the advice of any council, the clergy under such a rule would be under different laws, so that what is lawful in one diocese might be unlawful in the next, and what is sanctioned by one Bishop might be prohibited by his successor. There are some Bishops who would endeavour to suppress things, which by others are considered almost necessary to the order and decency of our services.

But it may be said that this plea of acting in conformity with the laws of the Church is urged by the most lawless of the clergy, and that the chief difficulty arises from their refusal to accept the interpretation of those laws as determined by legitimate authority. Now I must admit that I think these men ought not to be indiscriminately condemned, and that, while we are bound ordinarily to accept the decisions of our Courts, as determining the interpretation of the law, there are special circumstances connected with the judgments of the Judicial Committee which may justify a conscientious disregard of them. Without referring at all to the constitution of that Court of Appeal, or denying that the final decision must rest with the Secular Courts wherever personal rights are concerned, I cannot allow that the judgments of the Committee claim that deference which has long been rendered by Englishmen to the higher Courts. When it is notorious that such men as Lord Coleridge and the present Lord Chancellor impugned the judgment in the *Purchas* case, and that the Chief Baron and Sir R. Phillimore (with probably Judge Amphlett), have regarded the judgment in the *Ridsdale* case as dictated by policy rather than by the principles on which the judgments of strictly Law Courts are framed, I think that great allowance should be made for men who, taking the English language in its plain grammatical signification, and having studied the history of the whole question as fully (to say the least), as the members of the Committee, feel themselves bound to act on the interpretation of the laws which in their

consciences they believe to be true. And at all events, it is aggravating and unjust to treat them, and to designate them, as "lawless," while there is no reason to doubt that they sincerely believe themselves to be obeying the very letter of the law, which has been perverted by prejudiced judges. It may be necessary for those in authority, sometimes to accept and enforce the law as determined by such judges, but they may manifest their reluctance to do so, and should be very careful not to aggravate the sense of injury, by insulting the most conscientious men, by charging them with wilful lawlessness, more especially if they pass over, without any such reproach, men who are daily violating the law by omissions of things expressly ordered. One man calls his congregation to daily morning and evening prayer, another never opens his church from Sunday to Sunday; one has one, two, or three, celebrations of the Holy Communion every Sunday, another has only three or four in the year, so that many of his people are unable even to comply with the requirement that they communicate at least three times in the year; one invites his people to come to him when troubled in mind, to confess their sins, and receive absolution; another *never* reads the prescribed exhortation and invitation at all; and another, neglecting pastoral visiting, never searches the hearts of his people; one scrupulously observes the order of the Church with respect to the observance of certain days throughout the year, another passes them by altogether without notice.

It may be presumptuous, in one who resides far off from the sources of information, and is cut off from intercourse with men learned in ecclesiastical law, to give an opinion upon any of these judgments, but I cannot refrain from expressing a few thoughts suggested by them. With respect to vestments, the judgment appears to be based on the assumptions—that if the ornaments rubric is of force, the use of the vestments would be compulsory; and that the disuse of the vestments for a long period cannot be reconciled with the existence of a law enjoining their use. But, having very carefully studied the argument, I concur with those who maintain that, notwithstanding its ability and subtlety, it is unsound, and that the change of language in the rubric was purposely adopted in order to provide at some future time for the resumption of vestments, which could not then be required without danger to the peace of the

Country. If the adoption of the modifications ordered by the advertisements had been intended, surely the intention would have been clearly expressed; but we are told, "the rubric served to remind the Church that the general standard of ornaments was to be that established by authority of Parliament in 1549, but that the standard was set up under a law which engrafted on the standard a qualification, &c.;" and it may not unreasonably be asked, what remains of this standard after the adoption of the qualification, and whether the rubric, according to this interpretation, is not calculated rather to mislead than to instruct? At all events, they have very much to urge on their own behalf who cannot believe that the rubric may be thus explained away.

The other assumption, that the disuse of the vestments is incompatible with the existence of a law enjoining their use, is refuted by the fact, that the indisputable law of the 24th Canon has been, and is, habitually disregarded by Bishops and dignitaries of cathedrals, who may reasonably be expected to be much more particular as to such observances than the parochial clergy.

Having referred to the Canon, I desire to declare my concurrence with those who consider that it suggests a mode of settlement of this troublesome question, which all parties might be induced to accept. The principle is here unquestionably adopted, that there ought to be a distinguishing vestment for the celebrant, and also for his assistants in the Holy Communion, although there may be good reasons for permitting the surplice to suffice in churches other than the cathedrals, which should, however, be examples of all that is seemly and proper. And in these days, when the doctrine of the Atonement is assailed from so many quarters, it may well be argued that the memorial thereof ought to be celebrated, with such adjuncts as may most distinctly mark its importance, and testify to all men that it is the central doctrine of Christianity. While, therefore, I am content with the surplice and stole, or with the ordinary episcopal robes for *all* our ministrations, I can understand that men of piety, without any tendency towards Romanism or even to formalism, may hold themselves bound to mark the peculiar character of the Eucharist by the use of a special vestment, so long as that use is not in violation of the law of the Church of which they are ministers. And this seems to be the more necessary now that the surplice is so commonly worn by laymen



taking any part in the services. Whether the cope or the chasuble be the proper vestment for the celebrant, the principle is the same, and there can be no good reason why what is ordered in cathedrals should be prohibited in other churches. There is now much irritation, and it is not easy to judge what will be done, where such feelings exist; but I should hope that the most eminent men among the Ritualists (so called) would be willing, with a view to the peace of the Church, to accept some such compromise as that which has been proposed—that every Bishop or Priest celebrating the Holy Communion *may* wear a cope. Some would be unwilling to abandon the chasuble, which they believe to be the traditional vestment, but they ought to be content with the recognition of the principle for which they contend; and the other party ought not to object to that recognition, since it is already laid down in our Canons. Doubtless many on either side would contend against such an arrangement, but we may trust that, being right in itself, it would ultimately be more beneficial than the attempt to impose restrictions, involving a repudiation of the principles and practice of the Catholic Church, which we affirm that we have maintained while we have rejected Roman peculiarities.

With respect to the Eastward position, the mode in which the decision in the Mackonochie case is explained away, is anything but creditable; for it is virtually asserted that, if the consequences had been foreseen, their Lordships would not have insisted on the plain meaning of the words. But the words “standing before the table” either do, or do not, apply to the whole sentence. If they do, any other interpretation would have been a perversion of the law; if they do not, then the judgment based upon this interpretation is erroneous.

But in all the arguments, one fact seems to have been overlooked: which, though apparently trifling, appears to me of much importance. The question is always simply, whether side and end may not be convertible terms; but in every edition of the Prayer-book that I have seen, from the earliest, we have North-side (with a hyphen) and never North side as two distinct words. Now no printer would ever have printed thus of his own accord, and therefore I apprehend we have the North part of the West side clearly designated from the commencement of the service. Neither was the use of the term “South side” in

the Coronation service insisted upon, although *there* it most certainly means the *front* of the altar towards the South, and not the South *end*. Then again the directions for the manual acts are constantly quoted as if "before the people" applied to the cup, as well as to the bread; but, inasmuch as these words refer exclusively to the bread, I think the inference is fair, that they were intended to prevent the practice, common at the present day in many churches, of cutting up the bread beforehand, and bringing in a confréd heap of small pieces, so that the breaking which ought to be part of the act of consecration can scarcely be performed at all. And the order is most perfectly obeyed, when the Priest stands in the centre of the table, and thus in the presence of the people, acting on their behalf, breaks and consecrates the bread. Here he is more truly than in any other position "before the people," who are not to be supposed to be gazing at him, and watching his actions, but to be in spirit uniting with him in the consecration.

With respect to other points, insisted upon by the extreme party, the use of incense, although certainly based on scriptural authority, has been adopted in only a few churches, and is probably more calculated than any other to give offence; and I hope that it would be abandoned if there were a reasonable settlement proposed. But I cannot conceive why the two lights originally ordered should not be allowed, when in cathedrals and elsewhere the candlesticks have always remained, bearing silent testimony to the custom which appears to have been dropped through carelessness. And I have never been able to discover any reasons for the omission of the mingling of water with the wine, since it involves no superstition, was so far as we can judge the universal practice at the time of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and has ever been retained by the Church; while it is remarkable that in the New Testament the word wine is never used, but always cup, the very term which is applied to certain mixtures at the present day.

The portion of the Report referring to Confession was so much modified that it now means little or nothing, since the teaching of the Scriptures and of the Prayer-book is differently understood, and each person may interpret the Report according to his own opinions. I fully however concur in the general intention of the Report, so far as it tended to discourage habitual

confession, and the transfer of personal responsibility to a spiritual director; but I admit that I ought to speak with much caution, because I have not myself had sufficient parochial experience to enable me to judge of its practical effects, and when conversing with men well qualified to speak on the subject, I have heard that it has been to them a most valuable assistance in their ministry.

While, therefore, I have never been in a position in which I have felt myself bound to receive confessions, I cannot deny that the intervention of the human agent may frequently be of great value; and that our Lord, in His infinite mercy, has compassionately provided for the infirmity of our nature. We all know with what soothing self-deception the transgressor can commonly put away troublesome thoughts and stifle his convictions. But in confession the sinner has, as it were, to face the realities of his condition, and with the aid of a judicious guide he is enabled to detect secret motives and springs of action which would have escaped his own unaided investigation. The advantage of having recourse to the ministers of religion for aid of this kind, and for spiritual advice, is recognised by all who have any knowledge of human nature; and such confidential intercourse with the individual members of his congregation is sought by every minister, whether Churchman or Dissenter, who has any regard for their welfare and any earnest desire for the salvation of souls. Is it, then, better that this intercourse should be solemnly conducted with certain regulations as to method, and time, and place, or that its character should depend upon accidental circumstances? There are serious evils to be feared from the practice of receiving confessions by young, untrained men, but this is inevitable so long as the office of Confessor is unrecognised by the Church. The use of confession has, however, now been so commonly adopted, and so many *men* testify that it has been beneficial to themselves, and approve of it for their wives and daughters, that it cannot be abolished; and it will be our wisdom to endeavour to control, rather than vainly oppose, what has certainly some sanction in the Prayer-book and in the 113th Canon, and while strongly condemning every attempt directly or indirectly to make confession compulsory, to admit, with Hooker and other highly esteemed divines, that it is lawful, and a useful medicine for the relief of troubled consciences.

If we do not allow that the power of absolution is committed to the Church to be exercised by her ministers, we are opposed to the teaching of all branches of the Church (the foreign confessions of faith generally agreeing that the power of the keys is necessary), although we may rightly insist that it is declaratory rather than judicial, since the efficacy of the sentence depends upon the existence of contrition in the recipient. Varied attempts are made to explain away the meaning of the solemn form of Ordination of Priests, but I would adopt the language of the Primate of Ireland in 1873 : "There is not a vestige of authority for asserting that the Church in any age sanctioned such an opinion as that these words had respect only to sins against the Church, without any reference to sins as against God. What those words meant, when spoken to the Apostles, that they meant as applied in the ancient ordinals to the Bishops, and that they meant when they were transferred to the service for the ordination of the priesthood, and that they also meant when retained by our reformers in their amended Ordinal."

The increased vigour and influence of the Church in England is universally admitted, and the advance of ritual is so closely connected with the increase, that its advocates may fairly claim for such ritual a share of the credit of this improvement. And yet we frequently find them spoken of as though it had been brought about in spite of hindrances caused by their action. Who can be surprised if they are irritated by this treatment? It requires an effort now to recall the state of things common in this country thirty or forty years ago, when the condition of many of our country churches, and the character of the services, manifested a total absence of zeal and love for the House of God; and the gratifying change which we now witness is to be attributed in great measure, if not entirely, to the movement originating in the "Tracts for the Times." Because this influence has extended so as to affect men of other schools, we ought not on that account to ignore the source whence it has proceeded; and remembering how many changes, violently opposed at the first, are now generally accepted as improvements, we should treat with consideration the men who undertake the difficult work of pioneers, or of restorers of what was lost or decayed. Residing far from this country, and

revisiting it from time to time, I perhaps am more impressed with the change of feeling than the residents are; but no one can fail to observe, that Englishmen are no longer content with the simplicity in their public or private buildings, or in their habits, in which they formerly gloried. They have acquired a taste for beauty, and a love of ornament; and to this change may probably be attributed to some extent the success of high ritual. If this yearning be not gratified, we shall lose many, who will prefer the excitement of other places. The Dissenters are perfectly aware of this change, and are adapting themselves to it. In the reports of annual meetings, both of the Independents and of the Baptists, I find much stress laid upon the need of a more attractive ritual, if their younger members are to be retained.

It may, I suppose, be taken as an axiom that wherever there is activity there will be extremes; but the worst of them are less to be dreaded than apathy and indifference; and I am persuaded that, if the Bishops would generally manifest a true sympathy with these earnest workers, they would be able to guide and control them. The attempt to restrain them by force, or to check them by frowns and abuse, must necessarily fail: persecution, by refusing to license curates for men labouring to the very utmost of their physical strength, and by other means more or less direct, has awakened sympathy for them in many who dislike their doctrines and their ritual. When men persevere in a certain course, which must exclude them from preferment, and involves much unpopularity, their conscientious course extorts the admiration of all who are not blinded by prejudice. And the enactment of the Public Worship Regulation Act, with the avowed purpose of "stamping out ritualism," has, I verily believe, tended greatly to foster it. However great the merits of this new law may be, it can never now be beneficial to the Church, because a prejudice has been created against it, which is not likely to be dissipated so long as it remains in force. And it must be confessed that there is something wrong in the enactment, that three persons, non-communicants, not even nominal worshippers in our churches (which they may possibly never enter except as spies), if only they choose to declare themselves members of the Church of England, may originate proceedings against a clergyman with whom



they are wholly unconnected, except through their accidental residence within the limits of the Parish or District in which he officiates.

Although my own diocese is free from such extravagances, I am aware that in some places, more especially in England, men have far exceeded the limits by which members of our reformed branch of the Church are restricted, and that through the circulation of Roman Catholic Books of Devotion, and other injudicious teaching, the invocation of saints, and especially of the Virgin Mary, and other Roman corruptions, have been encouraged, and the Bishops are bound to discountenance, and to check as far as possible, the introduction of such practices: but the question is whether this object will be best accomplished by harsh measures, or by the manifestation of sympathy with their efforts to do good? By the former, we repel them, and compel them to assume an attitude of hostility or of defiance; whereas by the latter we should win the confidence of the most earnest and influential men, who would be valuable coadjutors in our endeavours to restrain the young and headstrong.

To myself, one of the most painful features of this controversy is the frequent reference to public opinion, as the standard of orthodoxy, or as the authority to which extreme deference should be paid. The publications of one School of Theology are constantly referring to the *Times*, as though its condemnation of certain views ought to be accepted as proving them to be erroneous; and even Bishops sometimes appear to deprecate its criticisms, whereas, the *Times* being avowedly the representative of the world and the embodiment of its spirit, I regard its opposition as more favourable than its approval. The world will ever hate those who testify of it that its ways are evil, and those who by a higher and more earnest life condemn the prevailing indifference and laxity. The world may approve of the Church as a department of the State, useful in restraining crime, and improving the masses, but it cannot appreciate the endeavour to attain to a high spiritual life, and the opposition of the world the organ of the Prince of this world, is a *prima facie* argument in favour of the system assailed. If it be affirmed that the public voice must be respected, where the Church being established comprehends the whole nation, I can only say, so much the worse for the Establishment, which is

certainly doomed, if it involves the recognition of the right of unbelievers, and even of persons unbaptized, to interfere with and control the body of Christ. Although well pleased that the Church in the Colonies is not established, I dread the effect of disestablishment in England, and I would do much and concede much in order to avert it; but I am persuaded that, if any considerable number of the clergy are driven in despair to join the ranks of the Liberationists, the Establishment must come to an end. I do not attach any importance to the publication of such extreme opinions upon the subject as are entertained by Mr. Mackonochie, but I am sure that many supporters of the Establishment will prefer to abandon it, if at any time they are compelled to admit that its existence is incompatible with spiritual freedom, and with loyalty to the Head of the Church. I am persuaded that the best security for its continuance will be found in a manifestation of life and energy, and a maintenance of its claims as a spiritual body, independent of the accidents of its position as established. The Church of England has special advantages, and opportunities of doing good, by virtue of its position as the National Church; but these advantages will be dearly purchased, if the most spiritually-minded and devoted men are alienated from her, driven either to Rome or to any form of Protestant dissent, by any abdication of her proper functions, and undue submission to the State, or deference to popular clamour.

I know that your Grace and the other Bishops in England have to encounter difficulties with which we in the Colonies are unacquainted, and a spirit has been evoked which may not be easily allayed; but, being convinced that the best course has not always been adopted by those in authority, and hoping that even now another method may be tried, and may be successful, I cannot refrain from expressing my sentiments as one of those to whom is committed the oversight of the Church of God. The violent opponents of the High Church party have proved conclusively that all attempts to conciliate them will be in vain, and that they will be satisfied with nothing less than a complete abandonment of the old paths, and a severance of the links by which we are connected with the Church of former ages. They absolutely deny the teaching of the Articles, still more forcibly inculcated in the Offices, that "sacraments ordained

of Christ be *not* only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession," and all who attribute to them any virtue as channels of grace, or believe that any spiritual powers or special gifts are conferred in ordination, are stigmatised as Sacramentalists and Romanisers. The *Record* advocates the admission to our pulpits and our cures of Nonconformist ministers, and the *Rock* prefers the new Reformed Church to the old Catholic Church of England, and these party organs do not hesitate to insist upon the necessity of such alterations in our Prayer-book as would involve a virtual repudiation of the tenets by which the Church is distinguished from the Sects. If all were thus reduced to the same level, it would be hard to justify the recognition by the State of Church dignitaries, or of the claims of the Church to any special privileges, and we could not expect to gain any adherents from other bodies, for we should have nothing better to offer them than they previously enjoyed.

It is evident from the reiterated complaints in these papers of the scarcity of evangelical curates that the prevailing tendency of the clergy, including the most able and valuable men, is towards the High Church party, which is no longer dry and formal, but manifesting zeal and energy, and a readiness to adopt any and every method whereby sinners may be converted, the lukewarm quickened, and the whole body of the faithful edified; and I fear that unless we recognise this fact, and show that we appreciate them, and, regardless of popular favour, give our countenance and support to the upholders of definite Church principles, we shall alienate many of those whose influence we should be most anxious to secure.

These observations have extended far beyond what I intended when I took up my pen, and I have to apologise to your Grace for troubling you with so long a letter, and to request your favourable construction of anything that I may appear to have spoken presumptuously, or without due respect to your high office.

I am, my Lord Archbishop,

Yours very truly,

H. NOVA SCOTIA.